DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 941 CS 011 533

AUTHOR Hansen, Vagn Rabol; Robenhagen, Ole
TITLE Abdullah's Genuine Indonesian Curry Powder--about Early Readers and Differentiated Teaching.
INSTITUTION Danish Inst. for Educational Research, Copenhagen.
REPORT NO ISBN-87-7416-315-9
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 9p.; Printed on colored paper. Translated by Mette Brostrom and Lotte Rosbak Juhl.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; *Early Reading; Elementary School Students; Family Environment; Foreign Countries; Gifted; Individual Development; Prereading Experience; Preschool Children; Reading Research; *Student Characteristics; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS *Denmark

ABSTRACT

A study established some characteristics of early readers and their homes and families, how they learned to read, and how their surroundings, and particularly the school, reacted. Approximately 300 Danish early readers and their families were interviewed and completed questionnaires. Results indicated that: (1) half the early readers had either a father or mother who was an early reader; (2) almost all the early readers were very curious, good at concentrating, and good at staying attentive; (3) many early readers remembered that their early reading surprised their parents; (4) interviews indicated that early readers showed a number of "indications"--early development of spoken language, interest in symbols and writing, and early awareness of the connection between spoken and written language; (5) homes of early readers were characterized by positive acceptance and approval; and (6) 30% of the early readers received negative reactions or no reaction from their schools. Findings suggest an urgent need for a differentiated teaching approach, which implies recognition that children are different and strengthening of the development of the individual. All pupils should be given developing instruction: the abilities and needs of gifted pupils need to be considered. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 365 941

Abdullah's Genuine Indonesian Curry Powder

- *About Early Readers and Differentiated Teaching*

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Vagn Rabøl Hansen
Ole Robenhagen

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ASO 11 533

The Danish National Institute for Educational Research

Abdullah's Genuine Indonesian Curry Powder
- *About Early Readers and Differentiated Teaching*

Vagn Rabøl Hansen and Ole Robenhagen
The Danish National Institute for Educational Research

Thomas, who is about 4 or 5 years old, is sitting at the dinner table with his parents. He is looking at a can of curry powder and asks his mother if she knows what it is. She answers him 'no', and Thomas reads aloud, "Abdullah's genuine Indonesian curry powder".

This surprises the parents who did not know that their son was able to read. However, Thomas is an early reader, i.e. he is able to read even though he has not started school yet. Quite many children are able to read before school as Thomas is.

A couple of years ago, the Danish National Institute for Educational Research advertised for early readers in the periodical of The Danish National Association of Reading Teachers "Læsepædagogen" and the newspaper "Berlingske Tidende". The Institute received more than 200 letters and about 100 phone calls. In addition to the information comprised in the answers to the advertisement, we gathered further information by sending out questionnaires and by interviewing.

This helped us form a picture of an early reader, and we established some characteristics of the early readers and their homes and families, how they learned to read, and how their surroundings and particularly the schools reacted.

Half of the early readers have either a father or mother who was an early reader. This might indicate heredity, still, the other half does not have a parent who was an early reader. More likely, the explanation is that all early readers have been used to a lot of reading in their homes. The parents read quite a lot, there may be reading aloud at home, and in most cases there is easy access to books, newspapers, and magazines. However, other factors than reading may be important. In general, it appears that the parents of the early readers have taken great interest in their children, their childhood and development. They have provided general support, they have encouraged and stimulated the child, and they have responded to the child's curiosity and needs.

Almost all the early readers are described as being very curious, good at concentrating, good at staying attentive, and having a great deal of persistence. Also, the early readers tend to have developed their spoken language early. However, this is not true of all early readers, some actually developed their spoken language comparatively late and there are exceptions with regard to the other characteristics mentioned.

The process of becoming able to read is both sudden and mysterious. Many early readers remember that their early reading surprised their parents.

In the interviews, however, it appeared that there had been a number of "indications" - in addition to the early development of spoken language - e.g. an interest in symbols and writing, and an early awareness of the connection between spoken language and written language. Many early readers have been active copying letters, signs, etc.

The sudden ability to read seems mysterious, as many say that they have not been taught to read. This is true if the word 'teaching' is identical with what goes on in school. In Denmark, it is seldom seen that ambitious parents force their young children through a school-like upbringing and education.

"The instruction of the children must respond to their abilities in order that they may all reach mutual as well as individual goals in school"

However, the early readers have probably received indirect "instruction" such as feed-back, directions, response to their curiosity, and generally supporting and stimulating surroundings. "We listened to him and took what he said seriously, and we have always tried to answer his questions" is a common remark from the parents of the early readers.

Most of the parents have intuitively performed their role in the process by supporting the child's development rather than forcing it.

In short, the homes of the early readers are characterized by a positive acceptance and approval which is of course more explicit the earlier the reading started. In addition to this, we have found that the early readers have been supported, stimulated, and encouraged by their parents and families and in most cases also by their surroundings in general.

Less than one per cent of the early readers who answered the questionnaire, had received a negative response from their surroundings.

However, if we take a look at the attitude of the schools, 30 per cent of the early readers have been met with either a negative reaction or no reaction at all.

The research also shows that there is a correpondence between the feeling of having been ignored by the school on one hand and being bored in school and thus developing bad working morales on the other.

A negative reception in school may be that the child is ragged by the other pupils or ignored by the teacher, who does not acknowledge that the child has reached a certain stage of development. Thus the early reader may have had to do the same work as the other pupils, perhaps had to repeat the lesson, even though the child knew it beforehand.

In any case, these early readers have had no challenges in school and they may develop a dislike of the subject Danish and perhaps even a dislike of the entire school.

Lack of challenges may bring along boredom in general but also bad working habits because the pupil is used to knowing the lesson beforehand or learning it with a very small effort. Some of the early readers interviewed say that they had to change school in order not to stagnate in their development. Others did not wake up until upper secondary school, and were shocked that suddenly demands were made on them.

However, many early readers say that they were well received in school, that they were free to do other exercises than the ones they knew how to do already, i.e. other exercises than the rest of the pupils. This might involve the use of different educational material or alternative activities which "the teacher thought suitable". In any case, these early readers had challenges which secured that their development continued thus avoiding boredom and stagnation. This also has the positive effect that the early readers who feel that the teacher helped them along will continue to be active readers.

The description of the reception of the early readers in school indicates an urgent need for a differentiated teaching during the 1990s.

The reason is both the demand of our time for the best possible utilization of the human resources and the demand for development of versatile, creative people can never be replaced by machines or technology.

A differentiated teaching implies the following conditions:

Firstly, a recognition that children are different (there are many indications that children of today are far more different than children were 20 years ago) and consequently must be instructed differently in order to reach mutual as well as individual goals in school.

Secondly, a strengthening of the development of the individual by being attentive to and by developing the special qualifications and needs of each pupil.

On one hand a differentiated teaching differs from the instruction encouraging each pupil to paddle his/her own canoe, on the other it differs from a traditional class teaching dealing with all the pupils as an undistinguished mass which must learn exactly the same.

In a historic perspective the development of the Danish *'folkeskole'*[1] has moved from an organizational differentiation sorting out the pupils to specific schools and later on to specific classes - towards a comprehensive school with a differentiated teaching within the class - yet maintaining a certain amount of organizational differentiation, namely special education.

Traditionally, focus has been on the weak pupils, and problems with "pupils in the upper end of the scale" have, to some degree, been overlooked. "They will manage" has been the attitude. However, there are many indications - e.g. the experience concerning the early readers - that it is not as simple as that.

All pupils should be given developing instruction, also those apparently not needing it. It is, actually, a human right!

More consideration for all pupils in the form of a differentiated teaching does not mean that the special consideration for the weak pupils should be discontinued. Special education will also be needed in future, among other reasons in order to neutralize the imbalance caused by poor conditions during childhood and adolescence.

However, the innovative idea is to direct attention towards the gifted pupils; their abilities and needs must be considered, too. Experience shows that the weak pupils will not pay for this - on the contrary. According to experience and research, all benefit when also the gifted pupils have challenges.

The concepts of equality and uniformity are often mixed up. Perhaps mostly by left-wings, who have not read The Communistic Manifesto which says: "The free development of all people depends on the free development of the individual".

The concept of equality implies equal possibilities for all and in school this means equal possibilities to reach the common goals. However, common goals are not necessarily identical goals and

equality also means that everybody has a right to receive a personally developing education.

If the Danish primary and lower secondary school is to remain a comprehensive school, the main principle must be: a differentiated teaching.

[1] *'folkeskole'* (= municipal primary and lower secondary school) for children within compulsory education age and for the forms connected herewith according to the Act on the Folkeskole - comprises a one-year pre-school class, a nine-year basic school, and a one-year 10th form.

Vagn Rabøl Hansen & Ole Robenhagen:
Abdullahs ægte indonesiske karry (= Abdullah's Genuine Indonesian Curry Powder).
Berlingske Tidende, major Danish newspaper, June 12th, 1991.

DPI no. 1993.66
Layout: Mette Broström
Translation from Danish: Mette Broström and Lotte Rosbak Juhl
Printing: TEK-NIK TRYK
© 1993 The Danish National Institute for Educational Research
28 Hermodsgade, DK-2200 Copenhagen N
ISBN nr. 87 7416 315 9